Norman Ernest HICKIN *PhD., BSc., FRES, F.I.Biol., FZS*
(1910 - 1990)

Norman Hickin, who died on 6th December, aged 80, was a dedicated entomologist, enthusiastic naturalist, wildlife artist, educator and pest control scientist whose activities gave rise to a whole woodworm and dry rot control industry.

After important wartime work for Dunlop, developing self-sealing aircraft fuel tanks, he joined the original Rentokil company in 1944 as Technical Manager and became its Scientific Director until his retirement twenty-seven years later, remaining as consultant until his death.

Author of the standard academic work on the larvae of Caddis Flies (Trichoptera) Norman Hickin also wrote more practical advisory books within his Rentokil Library series, and volumes on subjects ranging from birdnesting boxes to postcards and beachombing - a total of seventeen books. His 'Forest Refreshed', 'African Notebook', 'The Natural History of an English Forest', and the more modest 'Bookworms' are all illustrated by his painstakingly detailed scraperboard and line drawings well justifying his place in the Society of Wildlife Artists.

His authorship of papers and press articles, his lectures and broadcasts, persuaded the public and the professions that woodworm could be successfully treated, thereby saving a significant heritage of domestic furniture, valuable antiques, historic buildings and ordinary homes.

He was also a prolific writer on all aspects of natural history, contributing regularly to newspapers from the Kidderminster Shuttle to the Irish Times.

He was also frequently an expert witness in cases involving damage by pests, from termites to tapestry moths, and an active adviser to the British Wood Preserving Association.

Born at Aston, Birmingham in 1910, Norman went to the local King Edward VI Grammar School and Central Technical College, graduating as BSc. in Zoology with Special Entomology in 1936 and obtaining his PhD. in 1940 as an extern student of London University, with a thesis on spider beetles (Ptinidae). He subsequently became acknowledged as a world authority on the woodboring beetle family Anobiidae and on termites. In his worldwide travels he also collected specimens for such institutions as the Ewell Technical College of which he was appointed a director by London University, and for the British Museum of Natural History, which included a number of insect species new to science.

Throughout his life he was enthusiastically supported by his wife Emma whom he first met beside the Dowles Brook in his beloved Wyre Forest, and they imbued their daughters Verney and Sari with a love of natural history which in one incident resulted in the re-discovery after 100 years of the terrestrial caddis (Enoicyla pusilla).

Norman Hickin's childhood sense of wonder at natural history never deserted him and although outspoken on all subjects he held dear and in defence of his own hard-won achievements, he was always good company, with a warm sense of humour, and an accomplished raconteur.

The natural history of Ireland occupied much of his recent time.

To those of us privileged to count him as a colleague, he was also a source of great encouragement and inspiration.

Peter L G Bateman

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CHANGE OF ADDRESSES

Axel CHRISTIAN, Promenadenstraße 59a, D-O-8904 GÖRLITZ.

F.M.GIBON, ORSTOM, Laboratoire d'Ichtyologie, Museum national d'Histoire Naturelle, 43 rue Cuvier, F - 75005 PARIS.

Jolanda HUISMAN, 3035 N Fairview Avenue, Roseville, Minnesota 55113, USA.

Thomas PITSCH, Spandauer Damm 56, D - 1000 BERLIN 19.